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**Week 1 Assignment, Part 1.3: Reflections on assignments in EDLD 5306 Concepts of Educational Technology as shown in the Course-Embedded Assignment area of the Internship Handbook.**

On average, I was successful with EDLD 5306. I began the program in September 2009. The program has recently had drastic changes enhancing the program. All the content of EDLD 5306 was relevant to my work experience on a daily basis. One very important topic covered was the Texas Long Range Plan for Technology. I have worked with the Texas Long Range Plan for Technology but appreciated the depth to which we were able to learn about the plan. I truly appreciated learning the connections of what the Long Range Plan has affected in Texas. As a public school teacher and technology leader, I always knew we had to give teachers the STaR chart and analyze the data. After week 2, I was able to truly analyze our school and district’s data. Before, I would just gear professional development to our lowest scores. Now I understand that the Texas Long Range Plan and its connection to the STaR chart. I completely changed the professional development on our campus due to the research and learning that occurred in week 2. I can now work with teachers with online learning and its advantages without hesitancy due to lack of knowledge. I appreciated delving deeply into the STaR chart and presenting to my colleagues since this is an area that must be addressed yearly at any school I am employed.

During EDLD 5306, the assignments were designed to ensure we understood the basic components of PowerPoint, creating and editing blogs and wikis, and delving into the analytical data for my school. The PowerPoint was created to present information concerning the STaR chart. The assignment called for action buttons to transition each slide to the correct next slide. We also had to post our Power Point presentations to our blogs. I appreciated this aspect since I had never posted such articles on a blog before. I used AuthorStream to upload the PowerPoint. My first few attempts were not successful since I found a few errors in my PowerPoint. So, the third upload worked beautifully.

Another assignment I appreciated in EDLD 5306 was the discussion on CyberEthics. “Ryan Halligan, 13, lived in Vermont. His bullying went from the schoolyard to the Internet. He received IMs that called him gay, ugly, loser, and worse. His sister opened the door to the bathroom one morning and found Ryan dead. He hanged himself because he couldn’t take it anymore”( Hitchcock, 2007, pg. 14).

I have heard stories like this one and they all grab my heart. When I was in school, technology was used, but the internet was not even discussed until I was in college. I remember bullies in elementary and secondary vividly. We could escape them. Now, with so much happening on the internet, bullies have a larger audience and more ways to harm a child. I have two young children and one on the way, and I cannot help but wonder how I can protect my children so they do not become another Ryan Halligan? Laws are being put into place to help curb the cyberbullying but we are lacking in education. We are all still remembering how it was when we were a child and not realizing that today’s children have more threats. We cannot keep our children locked in their rooms but as an educator we need ways of preventing these incidences. I have used some of the videos from . One of my favorites is a story that is told that reminds the children of how words once spoken cannot be completely retracted. So, too, are the hurtful comments made online. We need to continue teaching our students about ethics and even simply netiquette. Some teachers may think it is “just one more thing to teach” but the bullies in Ryan Halligan’s life could have benefited from that lesson.

Another digital age discussion in EDLD 5306 concerned technology integration. "For computers to be effective teaching tools, teachers must thread computer use into group projects, whole-class demos, individual tutoring, classroom management, and alternative assessment and testing along with the traditional teaching methods of lecturing, reading and hands-on activities and experiments" (Price, B. 2005, pg. 53). When I went to Building Leadership Communities conference in Boston during the summer of 2009, Alan November discussed how computer labs should be obsolete. I agree, all that happens in a lab is that every student has to do the same goal at the same time. “For computers to be effective teaching tools, teachers must thread computer use into group projects, whole-class demos, individual tutoring, classroom management, and alternative assessment and testing along with the traditional teaching methods of lecturing, reading and hands-on activities and experiments” (Price, 2005, pg 53). In a constructivist approach, students can easily use a 2-4 classroom computer set up. Most elementary teachers have grasped the concept of stations/centers in their classrooms. However, put technology into their time honored centers, and many teachers have difficulty grasping the concept.

In one of the online discussion during EDLD 5306, we discussed the inequities of technology. I previously worked in Title 1 ESL/Bilingual schools and districts considered wealthy. In the “poor” schools, they actually received more funding for everything. In the wealthy schools, their money goes to Robin Hood and parent auctions and fundraisers must raise everything the school spends. In both types of schools, it all depends on the principal and their goals for the school if funding goes to technology. “Solutions to technology inequities ultimately rest with principals in their role as instructional leaders” (Mason & Dobbs, 2005, pg. 27). If in the “poor” schools the principal sees only testing as the main goal, then the digital divide widens. In a wealthy school where parents are raising the money, I have seen that the parents want to ensure that their children get technology so then the principal will make it a goal for the school. It all depends on how the campus principal views the worth of technology. This discussion online was beneficial and assisted me in reflecting on the variety of schools and integration strategies.

After my first two courses I took several months off due to the birth of my third child. During the time I was away from the program the Technology Leadership coursework changed considerably. I reorganized my course work in August 2010. Through personal perseverance, I contacted many different people in Academic Leadership about how I needed to understand and be informed of the new requirements. In February 2011, I formulated my plan to involve the Technology Facilitator and Leadership Standards (Williamson & Redish, 2009). During the process of creating my alignment of each standard, I realized to a large extent my current career is already aligned with these standards. Luckily, I was able to easily find areas that I fulfill each standard. The standards also help leaders to focus their efforts on important issues and know that the areas they are working on are nationally recognized. After looking through ISTE’s standards for technology leadership I realize that the content I utilize with the teachers at my school are on the correct path. It also helped me to focus on important aspects such as our district acceptable use and different areas of professional development for the teachers at my school.

References

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Price, B. (2005). Who’s in control of the technology-integrated school? *Principal Leadership*, 6(1), 53.

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**Week 1 Assignment, Part 1.4:** **Reflections on assignments in EDLD 5333 Leadership for Accountability as shown in the Course-Embedded Assignment document in the Resource section of the course.**

EDLD 5333 was a course filled with vital information that affects campuses on a regular basis. During this course I learned both short and long-range planning and problem solving practices of successful school leaders. I discovered information concerning individual campus and its relationship to the district planning process.

To understand the site-based decision making committee on my campus, I interviewed Dr. Lynda Carter, principal of University Park Elementary. I also consulted Ron Smith, Highland Park ISD administrator of technical services, who is a member of a site-based decision making committee as a representative of Highland Park’s central office administration. Dr. Carter (personal communication, June 24, 2011) stated that our site-based decision making committee is known locally as CLC (Campus Leadership Council) and meets a minimum of four times a year. The members of the committee include the principal, a teacher representative from each grade level, one para-professional, two PTA representatives, two Dad’s Club representatives, Building and Grounds representative, a principal appointed member, one community member, and a central office administration representative.

I talked with Ron Smith (personal communication, June 24, 2011) because he has been on several district CLC teams and I wanted him to compare how our school runs compared to other schools. Mr. Smith was very open in expressing that the only differences he found were the topics covered. Previously, he was at one school in our district when they were going through local bond issues. The main topics for that school, he stated, were topics concerning the local bond. I asked him if he ever observed any disagreements on any of the committees he has served on in our district. Ron Smith was very honest in his reply that our district has parents who want the best for their children and work to ensure that the proper enhancements are in place that he has never encountered any disagreements. Overall the committee is a way to enhance relationships between the school and the community in a positive manner. The site based decision making occurs with a detailed agenda and all notes taken by the secretary are posted on the campus website so anyone has the opportunity to read about the topics discussed.

It is extremely important to remember during SBDM meetings and other campus meetings that we are making decisions for our students benefit.  The longer we are in education sometimes people forget that the students need to always be first and foremost when decision making. We need to constantly work together for the success of all students. The classroom teacher is not the only person who needs to feel alone in this commitment. As Richardson (2005) pointed out, "Success never relies on one person" (pg. 35).

I learned in EDLD 5333 that campus improvement is ongoing. We never reach a goal and stop. “This is why we teach and lead. Improvement, after all, is essentially learning” (Elmore, 2007, pg. 3). We must continue to find areas to address so that improvement is a true cycle; one that never stops but is always ongoing.

Formative assessments are another area that needs to be addressed while working through action plans and for continuous improvement. My campus will need to disaggregate the formative assessments we use without students. For continued growth we need to create effective campus learning communities to effect change and create an atmosphere of success for all students.

Often schools go through a period where they feel like they are not making any growth. We need to take those times and consider them appropriate to development. “Evidence that our best efforts are not producing what we want them to produce is feedback. The evidence is trying to tell us something about what we are doing and if we listen to it, reflect on it, and give it voice, it will help us understand what to do next” (Elmore, 2007, pg. 3) We take formative assessments and investigate if the goals set need to be modified or completely changed. Consensus is an important area to consider so that one team does not overpower the whole group.

Reeves (2007) states, “Meaningful school improvement begins with cultural change-and cultural change begins with the school leader” (pg. 94). The school I am currently employed has a principal who holds every teacher to a very high standard. We have students who are going to be successful so the principal ensures that we all understand that mediocrity is not allowed. Our principal’s expectation is for at least 90% of each grade level who is tested on TAKS to be commended. No one wants to have the class that does not meet her goal.

“Low-performing schools are undergoing make-overs rather than the most radical kinds of restructuring” (Jennings & Renter, 2006). I formerly worked as a fourth grade teacher at a Title 1 ESL/Bilingual elementary school. When NCLB started, many teachers were worried. I have found, though, that the teachers who focused on the curriculum, collaboration, students’ engagement, and student specific needs, rarely had to worry about their students’ Annual Year of Growth. We need to recognize that students, no matter what their home-life, deserve a beneficial education. If we find our teachers saying a certain population cannot perform, then maybe we need to look at ourselves and find out why we cannot and fix that mentality.

“ Schools are paying much more attention to achievement gaps and learning needs of particular group of students” (Jennings & Renter, 2006). I have to admit that I appreciate NCLB for raising the bar on sub population groups, especially for our students in special education. I remember when many special education teachers did not consider teaching students grade level appropriate topics as important. Unfortunately, their students kept getting more behind. I do think we need to be cognizant of severe special education students and their ability to take state tests. But, for the most part, I appreciate NCLB for holding us accountable for our special education students.

“The idea of a teacher learning community is that each person comes with a clear idea about what they want help with, and the group helps that person with the task” (William, 2007, pg. 40). Educators need to take ownership of their professional development through personal learning communities. PLN’s help teachers to find areas they wish to work and find others seeking the same area of learning and enhancement. Teachers need to branch out from their school, also. “No school is an isolated entity providing a specific portion of basic education within a particular community – it is a part of a continuum or a pipeline of institutions, which together form an educational pipeline through which groups of students pass” (Tolley & Shulruf, 2009). Teachers can find a variety of options within Facebook, Ning, Twitter, Diigo, etc. Being a part of this digital age allows us all to be a part of a PLN.

During EDLD 5333 we worked on the importance of reflection which is immensely important. I find reflection valuable since too often we glance over data and do not make adjustments. The reflective piece must go beyond just finding strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes principals and campus leaders assume teachers understand how to take the data and make appropriate decisions. Often, educators need the guidance of a reflective piece and a guide. “Unless the team emerges from the data analysis process with a clear plan of action for identified students and for classroom instruction, it has wasted its time” (Thomas, 2006, pg. 40). If we utilized a reflection guide like the one from Thomas, then teachers can take all this data to another step. As a principal I feel I would be more likely to utilize the reflection guide.

During EDLD 5333, I recognized my next stages of improvement involve continued professional development, utilizing differentiation, continuously revisiting goals to possibly update or revise, and utilization of formative assessments, and not just summative assessments, are extremely important for true measurement of goals.

References

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**Assignment 1.5: Reflections on Technology Facilitator Standard I: Technology Operations and Concepts in your textbook (25 Points)**

**Directions**

Standard I is important because teachers need basic computer skills to scaffold onto more innovative technology. “The evolving nature of technology also requires ongoing monitoring and building of educator proficiency” (Williamson & Redish, 2009, pg. 21). When I began teaching fifteen years ago, knowledge of Microsoft programs was considered an exceptional skill. I remember learning that people can right click using their mouse from a technology specialist, only three employed in our large district at the time. What seems so simplistic in 2011, was completely foreign fifteen years ago. Every opportunity gives educators ways to learn and be innovating. Often, teachers have missed the underlying knowledge than do not understand more advanced technological topics. We would never expect a child to understand addition if they could not first count. Technology is similar since we must have an understanding of the basic computer skills to advance into more progressive avenues. We must help our teachers learn to be proficient in technology. Students want to utilize technology in school. Unfortunately, as Prensky wrote, students come to school and must “power down (2001, pg. 4).

In Standard I technology leaders are expected to, “demonstrate continual growth in technology knowledge and skills to stay abreast of current and emerging technologies” (Williamson & Redish, , pg. 25). During the summer of 2011, I attended the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) conference in Philadelphia. I often appreciate technology conferences. Alan November’s Building Leadership Communities (BLC) in Boston is my favorite but that summer I chose to participate in ISTE’s yearly conference. I flew to Philly on Sunday, June 26 with a fellow Campus Technologist.  I attended many sessions. The first few days the sessions were not up to our standards but Tuesday and Wednesday were excellent.  I took detailed notes on sessions using a Google doc so I could easily recall information shared and also share with my colleagues. The Doc is located at: <http://goo.gl/1zcAj> . We returned to Dallas the evening of July 29, 2011.

At our summer Technology Academy held in Highland Park, I presented “The Award for the Best Web Tools Goes To….” Using the Google presentation tool to create my slide show found at <http://goo.gl/dxhXX>.  I also presented Web 2.0 Tools for Writers during the district Technology Academy using the presentation at <http://goo.gl/TRSWj> .

I enjoyed presenting the Web Tools to the district on July 26 and July 28, 2011. The teachers at the presentation were very appreciative of the information shown. I tried to have sites that would benefit my audience of elementary teachers. I allowed the teachers to have time at the end to get familiar with the sites they found most interesting and valuable for the grade they taught.

Teachers must utilize technology with their students in an integrated approach without the technology skills being separate. “Technical literacy should not be taught as an isolated subject, nor should activities with technology be isolated from other activities in the classroom. This does not mean that time should not be spent teaching students content or how to use a technology tool. However, assimilating the content should occur at the time the students need to master the material and only as much instruction as they need to complete their project should be provided” (Sprague & Dede, 1999).

On my campus I meet regularly with teachers. I also have training sessions after school at least once a month. During conference time meetings, I discussed with the teachers the technology areas they utilize with their students. In gathering this information, I shared a Google Doc with the teachers so they could see what other grade levels were accomplishing. At the next meeting with teachers we discussed the areas of technology our students must know before they left the grade to be prepared for the software and topics being covered in the next grade. "There’s a whole new world out there with a whole new set of skills our kids need to manage” (Richardson, 2007, pg. 97). We utilized the TEKS and NET\*S to ensure we covered areas required. Teachers who felt uneasy were those whose technology skills were not proficient. I continued working with the reticent teachers and they started to take on more technology with their classes.

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Sprague, D. & Dede, C. (1999). If I teach this way, am I doing my job: Constructivism in the classroom. *Leading and Learning, 27(*1). Retrieved March 1, 2011 from the International Society for Technology in Education at http://imet.csus.edu/imet9/280/docs/dede\_constructivisim.pdf

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**Assignment 1.6: Reflections on Technology Facilitator Standard II: Planning and Designing Learning Environments and Experiences.**

“As educators, we must take our cues from our students’ 21st century innovations and behaviors, abandoning, in many cases, our own pre-digital instincts and comfort zones.” Prensky is absolutely correct. Many teachers are more likely to take a cell phone away from a child instead of changing their own thinking. That teacher could realize the impact of the cell phone and begin finding ways to utilize the cell phones the students already have. We have a teacher in our district that was even featured on the evening news because the press was so enthralled with a teacher utilizing cell phones in her High School classroom. All the teacher did was set up simple surveys on [www.polleverywhere.com](http://www.polleverywhere.com/) and the students were so excited. High school students excited about going to class should not be a novelty. "A second key barrier to technological adoption is more challenging. Schools famously resist change. . . . But resisting today's digital technology will be truly lethal to our children's education. They live in an incredibly fast-moving world significantly different that the one we grew up in" (Prensky, 2008).

I work with Digital Immigrants on a daily basis. Many want to embrace new technology. There seems to be a group, though, have insurmountable difficulties understanding technology. I know of several teachers who have tried learning how to do a simple copy and paste but must look up their notes on the topic before they will even attempt this small feat. On their same team, these teachers will have colleagues who are using Web 2.0 tools without even realizing their coworkers have no idea how to integrate or use these tools. How does a school tell parents when they end up with a teacher who mentally cannot learn technology that their students have full year with this person? I am frustrated for the teacher who has a block where technology is concerned. But, more importantly, I have sadness for the students in their class. I continue to work with all the teachers and try new innovative ways to help them each learn.

“Teachers may know how to operate technology, but they are not sure how to implement technology into the classroom to support student learning” (Williamson & Redish, 2009, pg. 37). For the past eight years I have worked with LeeChel and Chris Moersch as a consultant with Levels of Technology Integration (LoTi). To help create an atmosphere where teachers understand the connection between technology and curriculum is vital. Most teachers are challenged with how to implement technology effectively and lessons at a high cognitive level. We need to provide our teachers with a guide for a balance in technology integration.

I truly enjoy my job since I am able to meet with teachers regularly to help them plan lessons that integrate technology. At the end of September, 2010, the third grade teachers wanted to start a project with their student’s favorite places around our city. I met with the teachers to discuss the possibilities of branching this lesson so that the student could take the idea global. We started with the logistics of students gathering pictures of their favorite spots around University Park, Texas. The students were to create a five or more “slide” narrated VoiceThread about their favorite spots around town which we called hot spots. We contacted our district Global Teacher, Edna Phythian, to help us connect with a class in Madrid. We created a shared Google doc to keep everything organized and in writing. I met again with the teachers in early October to finalize lesson and to create a simple blog where we could link each students VoiceThread for others to easily find and interact. On October 21 I updated our shared Google doc to have links to each teacher’s VoiceThread Hotspot project on the blog. Later the teacher from Madrid shared her link.

On December 12, 2010, I met with the second grade team on integration strategies. One of the areas the team was having difficulty was in the teacher trying to help every child during computer lab time. I talked with the teachers about showing one or two students how to do certain steps and the student helper could go around the lab and help students. The teachers appreciated the tip and began utilizing computer helpers in the lab.

During the same meeting I gave the second grade teachers ways to utilize the three classroom computers without interruption during lessons and class work time. I showed them to take popsicle sticks and put a student name on each stick, divide the sticks into three equal groups, and place each group into one cup without a label on one side of each computer. Then I put another cup labeled “finished” on the other side of each the computer. I explained that if they took one stick randomly out of the cup and placed it on a student’s desk they would know to be the first at the computer station. The procedure would be then that when the student was finished with their computer time, to put their stick in the “finished” cup, and then randomly choose another stick. They would put the new stick on the correlating student’s desk and that student would recognize that it was their turn at the computer station. They would repeat the procedure for each group’s computer station. At the end of the day, the teacher would also know which students had the chance to use the computers and who still needed to go the next day. Once all students had a turn at the computers, they could start all over with the procedure. This has been a great tool for many teachers at the schools I have worked. The teachers appreciate because they no longer have to “keep up” with who has gone and who still needs computer time.

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